

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Congressman Mike Pence released the following statement today as he joined 35 of his colleagues in signing a letter written by Congressman Trent Franks (R-AZ) to the Secretary of Defense. The letter urges Secretary Gates to reconsider the military's decision to revoke its invitation to Rev. Franklin Graham to participate in the National Day of Prayer event at the Pentagon:

"The men and women of our military put themselves in harm's way to protect our freedom. And chief among those freedoms is the right of religious expression. America was founded on the notion that the government should not interfere with the religious practices or expressions of our people.

"That's why it is so disheartening that leaders in our military have rescinded an invitation to Rev. Franklin Graham because of something he said about a religious belief. Rev. Graham is held in high esteem by many in our country. He has served the sick and needy with compassion. And like his father before him, Franklin has spoken his religious beliefs with unwavering clarity.

"Not everyone will agree with all that Rev. Graham has to say. But we can agree that our Constitution protects his right to say what he believes. There should be no equivocation on that point, and I am urging President Obama and Secretary Gates to direct the military to once again invite Rev. Graham to Thursday's National Day of Prayer event at the Pentagon."